

NEWS FROM NORTH AMERICA

JCA celebrates 34th anniversary

By Eddie J. Grant

TORONTO

THREE is a need for dialogue as well as protest and confrontation in working through the problems that face Jamaicans in Canada.

Dwight Whylie, broadcaster and journalist, made the observation while speaking to a gathering of over 400 people at the 34th Independence dinner at the Jamaica Canadian Association (JCA). Referring to the role of Jamaican-Canadians in Canada Whylie said, "The prospect of prosperity is an integral part of our degree of involvement."

In praising some of the many

Jamaicans who have made an impact he commended black activist Dudley Laws for "constantly reminding Canadian society that it undervalues black people, and for making common cause with other disadvantaged groups, but we need dialogue as well as protest and confrontation."

"We need more people like Bromley Armstrong, Alvin Curling, Rosemary Brown who aspire for the highest level of political representation, and we need to emulate the Lincoln Alexanders and the Colin Powells. We need to build a stronger volunteer institution and co-operate with each other, and for that, the Jamaican Canadian Association is a shining example."

Referring to Jamaica's progress since gaining Independence, he recalled, "My feelings of hope, pride, excitement, freedom, opportunity and buoyant optimism when I watched the Union Jack flag come down, and the Black, Green and Gold rise in the National Stadium 34 years ago. When the 'Eternal Father' was first asked by a thousand voices to

bless our land."

But Jamaica has both a negative and a positive side to it he said. "On the negative side, our school system has become uneven, underfunded, badly equipped and many of our teachers undertrained. So the magnificent education people of my age group got, based on a superb primary school system, is being eroded."

Whylie spoke about areas like the island's public health system which is in a "mess", the roads, communications and transportation which "suffered from a stop and go/wait and see attitude which has wasted the country's limited resources and preventing long term projects from running their full course."

But the positives he observed, include privatisation of areas like the telephone company, the improvement in public utilities like electricity and the increase in private health clinics which have taken the pressure off of the understaffed and underfunded public hospitals.

Whylie told the audience that Jamaicans have lived up to the

national motto, "Out Of Many One People," because "we are the most cosmopolitan people on earth, and we have shown the world how different cultures can blend together. What we have done in Jamaica, is to recognise the reality and magnificent example of full integration."

Herman Stewart, president of the JCA in outlining the Association's plans, made an impassioned plea to the guests for their financial support of the newly acquired building.

"Among some of the plans we are seriously contemplating, is the building of a banquet hall, with a seating capacity of 500, where future functions of this magnitude can be held. We already have the space, so we are also looking to build an area where our seniors, and in particular our youths, can meet and socialise. A member's lounge is also on our agenda, but to accomplish all these set goals, we will need a total of \$750,000, so we will need the support of everyone here tonight."

Association past president Karl Fuller was honoured for his dedication while other members including John Brooks, Carmen Jenns, Miah Bailey and Loy Mannings were also recognised for their contributions to the organisation.